



OFFICE OF RESPONDENT
PARENTS' COUNSEL

Colorado's Interdisciplinary Parent Representation Model

Jill Cohen, LSW

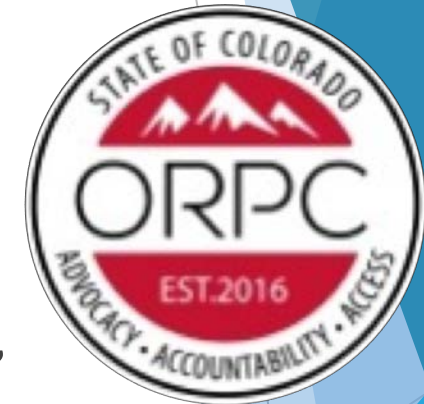
Social Worker - Director of Programs

303-731-8750 * jcohen@coloradoorpc.org

ORPC Mission

The Office of the Respondent Parent Counsel's (ORPC) mission is to protect the fundamental right to parent by providing effective legal advocates for indigent parents in child welfare proceedings.

- Independent governmental agency within the State of Colorado Judicial Branch. Funded by the State Legislature.
- Vested with the oversight and administration of Respondent Parents' Counsel representation in Colorado since **July 1, 2016**.
- Oversight of Attorney Contractors, Contract Renewals, Contractor Evaluations, Client Grievances, Training, Case Consultations, Expert and Social Work Resources, Collaborations, & Pilot Projects.



ORPC Current Staffing and Contractors

Director	Deputy Director	Appellate Director	Case Strategy Director
Training Director	Social Worker/ Programs Director	CFO, Accountant, Payments Coordinator, Administrative Assistant	New 2019-20 hires: 1 Attorney, 1 Admin, 1 Program Analyst
300 + Attorney Contractors	25 Social Worker and Family Advocates - Contractors	Forensic Experts - Contractors	Investigators & Interpreters - Contractors

Case consultation + Resources



Case Consultation is the path to access additional resources: Social Workers, Experts, Interpreters, Private Investigators



ORPC recruits experts and maintains a list of experts, credentials, and rates by county

Experts for motion practice and litigation
Defense social workers
Interpreters
Private Investigators



We match an attorney and an expert resource. If it's the right fit and approved, we pay the experts directly.

Social Work Pilot Program – 3 Judicial Districts

One full time social work case capacity in three CO Judicial Districts (mix rural/urban)

Automated eligibility for certain cases

- ✓New Dependency and Neglect filings
- ✓Children 6 and younger on the petition
- ✓Out of home removal
- ✓Social worker capacity
- ✓Attorneys do not decide

Parent defense social worker NOT a retained social work expert

Long term assignment

2 year program evaluation (MSU Denver) to measure:

- Permanency outcomes
- Permanency timeframes
- Financial costs

Started in July 2017: 121 Open Cases * 84 Closed Cases

Feedback on the Interdisciplinary Model

Respondent Parent Attorneys

- ▶ Most effective representation
- ▶ Requests for social workers at 5-6 social worker requests per week
- ▶ Asking earlier in the life of a case
- ▶ Changing the dynamics of practice

Clients

- ▶ Feel supported, heard
- ▶ Confidentiality appreciated
- ▶ Appreciate support at conferences, court and critical appointments
- ▶ Go to person

Caseworkers/County Attorneys/GALs

- ▶ Mixed
- ▶ Don't fully understand the role
- ▶ Confidentiality issues
- ▶ Territory issues
- ▶ Strong advocacy is intimidating

Parent Defense Social Workers

- ▶ Love the work, passionate
- ▶ Daily frustrations
- ▶ Strong individual advocacy/crisis intervention
- ▶ Identifying systemic issues

Impact on Permanency Outcomes & Timeframes

Cornerstone Advocacy

- Social Worker joins legal defense team when parent has had supervised visits 2 x per week for 4 + months; Parent is progressing in treatment
- Team goal: less restrictive, more frequent visits (Cornerstone - Visits)
 - Out of court: SW observes 2 visits, reaches out to GAL, CW and visitation supervisor to solicit their feedback. SW assesses need for new/alternative supervision/coaching. (CORNERSTONE - SERVICES)
 - Out of court: SW helps client ask about visits at family engagement meeting. *What do I need to do or show for my visits to be unsupervised?* (Cornerstone - CONFERENCES)
 - Out of court: SW confers with RPC due to lack of clarity, movement, court order obstacles. SW advocates for unsupervised visits.
 - Out of court: RPC asks parties to confirm a position on unsupervised visits.
 - Out of court: RPC/SW obtain services updates, visitation notes (discovery), identify possible expert for a formal visiting assessment and possible testimony.
- In court: RPC files a motion for unsupervised visits.
- In court: Parties consent to unsupervised visits or hearing granted. OR
- In court: Motion for hearing granted. RPC/SW strategize on contested visitation hearing, prepare client, obtain updated treatment reports, retain expert.

Colorado Challenges

Culture varies county by county

- Pilot counties: SW fully accepted
- Boulder, Weld counties: SW not permitted into visitation centers, require ROIs

Interdisciplinary Representation

- Why can't the social worker testify?
- Requests at termination filing

Urban vs. Rural

- Recruitment
- Resources

Supervision & Training

- Contractor versus agency staff model

Community

- Contractor versus agency staff model
- Group supervision, training, annual conference



OFFICE OF RESPONDENT
PARENTS' COUNSEL

JILL COHEN, LSW

DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS

303-731-8750

JCOHEN@COLORADOORPC.ORG

WWW.COLORADOORPC.ORG